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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2462

May 25, 1990

FARM SUBSIDY PROBLEM -- No doubt about it, farmers have an image problem with Congress over the amount of taxpayer money used to subsidize the nation's production of food & fiber. It's an old story. This year, the General Accounting Office has taken one of its periodic looks at the situation in a new report, "Farming and Farm Programs -- Impact on the Rural Economy and on Farmers." GAO is the chief investigative arm of Congress. GAO doesn't plow any new fields in this 43-page report, but the report does provide timely figures for the current 1990 farm bill debate. For a copy, call the GAO press office at (202) 275-2812.

ANOTHER GOOD PUB to have regarding the farm bill is USDA's "Farm Bill Issues -- Background Facts." It looks at various programs, how they function and the results. "Farm Bill Issues" might be a handy reference for the 1990 farm bill discussions. For a copy, call (202) 447-2798.

FORMER UNDERSECRETARY of Agriculture Dan Amstutz is under consideration for a seat on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Journal of Commerce reported recently. Amstutz is one of four being considered for the seat vacated last month by Bob Davis, who left CFTC to join the New York Mercantile Exchange staff. The other three under consideration are former Assistant Treasury Secretary Charles Sethness, White House Ag Adviser Cooper Evans and Bill Miller, a portfolio manager with General Motors.

"MAD COW DISEASE" -- Since 1986, more than 13,000 British cattle have been hit by an illness known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or "mad cow disease." The ailment can take two to eight years to show up. Affected animals refuse to be milked, stagger as if drunk and sometimes turn violent. More than 1,000 schools in Britain have banned beef from their menus because of concern that the disease could be passed to humans through food. The disease is not known to exist in the U.S. Cattle imports from Britain were banned last year because of the disease. Contact: Larry Mark (202) 447-3977.

QUICK -- HOW MANY CALORIES in a burger & fries? What is a calorie, anyway? For the answer, USDA has: "Calories & Weight: The USDA Pocket Guide." For a copy, call: Marci Hilt (202) 447-6445.



NAFB SOUTH CENTRAL REGIONAL MEETING May 4 - 5 at South Padre Island, Texas, was well attended. Tours included the Atascosa Wildlife Refuge, citrus & sugar producers and the facilities of the Confederate Air Force.



FARM BROADCASTERS from across the nation attended the "Washington Ag Watch" Conference in Washington, D.C., May 20 - 22. Evan Slack (Evan Slack Network, Denver, Colo.) (left) was among many who sent materials from the conference back to their stations. Evan used USDA Radio's Maria Bynum's office to transmit his stories. Several broadcasters took time from their schedules to visit USDA Radio & TV staff members. (Right photo, left to right) USDA Radio's Brenda Curtis, Jeff Stewart (Ag Radio Network, Utica, N.Y.) Hugh Robinson (KKOW, Pittsburg, Kans.) & USDA Radio's Gary Crawford. This photo was taken in USDA Radio's Control Room.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1719 -- The June Agricultural Survey provides information that will be used for the rest of the year to predict crop production and stocks. On this edition of AGRICULTURE USA, Dave Carter talks with USDA's Chief Statistician Charles Caudill and others about ag surveys & their importance. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 min. documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1202 -- Tourist trash; a different outdoor grill; non-toxic household products; paper recycling; dining out; elegance on the decline. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. consumer features.)

AGRITAPE #1709 -- USDA News Highlights; 1990 sign-up results; USDA's June survey; pond doctor; a variable weather pattern. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1321 -- Adrenal gland & shipping disease; the forests fight back; resistance -- a numbers game; sheep take to turnips; fabulous fungus. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Mon., June 4, world ag outlook; Tues., June 5, weekly weather & crop update; Wed., June 6, dairy products; Thurs., June 7, tobacco outlook.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m. EDT each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE
(May 23, 1990)

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on GATT & ag; Lynn Wyvill reports on BBQ food safety; Chris Larson has the story on a conservation canoe trip.

ACTUALITIES -- Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jack Parnell on food safety; Arthur Dunkel, GATT director general, on GATT progress; USDA Economist Leland Southard on pork & beef production; USDA Economist Jim Schaub on soybean exports; USDA Economist Greg Gajewski on farmland values; USDA Economist Ed Allen on wheat production; and John Phillips on Soviet wheat production.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- A fish story; crop monitoring with videos; deadly lawns.

Available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30-7:45 p.m., EDT, Transponder 12D
SATURDAY 10:30-11:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 10D
MONDAY 8:30-9:15 a.m., EDT, Transponder 12D
(Repeat of Saturday transmission)

OFFMIKE

BIG CRAP SHOOT...is the description of farming this year in the area served by Randy Schmitt (WIKY, Evansville, Ind.). Planting is usually completed by mid-May, but only 2% of corn is in the ground. 10 days of baking sun is needed to dry soggy fields. Randy says the fast approaching deadline for corn and soybeans is June 15. Meanwhile the delay offers opportunities for machinery maintenance. Producer attitudes are described as optimistic, but frustrated.

SOUTH CENTRAL...region vice president Curt Lancaster (VSA Radio Network, San Angelo, Texas) and Charlie Rankin (KURV, Edinburg, Texas) conducted a super regional meeting at South Padre Island, Texas, May 4-5 despite the rain. We understand a few drops also wet the proceedings that Ron Hendren (WTAD, Quincy, Ill.) and northeast region V.P. Joe Cornely (WRFD, Columbus, Ohio) put together in Hannibal, Mo., May 11-13. Damp clothes don't dampen spirits at NAFB meetings.

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FLOODS...in southwest sections of Arkansas have damaged crop land. While no major floods have hit northeast sections of the state, James Guthrie (KFIN, Jonesboro) says the area is too wet even for rice planting, 30 percent behind schedule in late May.

COTTON...is key to economic well-being, says Richard Shields (KKYN, Plainview, Texas) and it's looking good. Previous two years were disappointing, but this spring growth is well underway with few signs of infestations. He says producers in the western half of the state could use moisture.

WELCOME...feedback from Bill Whitton (Farm Times, Rupert, Idaho), Mary Gaines (Alabama Public TV) and Dave Oseland (WCFC-TV, Chicago) regarding our TV news and feature service distributed via satellite.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vic Powell".

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division